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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE:

SUBJECT: New York Times Story on French Missiles for Israel

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Khalil Makkawi, Charge d'Affaires, Embassy of Lebanon
NE - Harrison M. Symmes
NE - Anton N. Nyerges

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Mr. Makkawi asked whether the Department had any comment on the Finney story in the New York Times of January 7 concerning French missiles for Israel and Israel-French nuclear collaboration. Mr. Symmes replied that a Departmental spokesman had already said we have no knowledge of the statements in the story. As far as we are aware no official U.S. sources put out any such information. We are aware, Mr. Symmes noted, of similar stories in the past by the French newspaper Combat and the Beirut newspaper Al Hayat. According to press reports, while the French Government has denied it has agreed to supply missiles to Israel, it has stated that private French firms have received permission to engage in missile research with Israel. Le Monde also has stated that it is improbable that the rockets in question are the military version of the Diamant but it is not excluded that the missiles are an extrapolation of the experimental Topaze, solid fueled, two stage vehicle.

Regarding nuclear cooperation, Le Monde said it believed fairly extensive French-Israeli cooperation began toward the end of the Fourth Republic but that, subsequently, control over peaceful use of assistance provided was seriously strengthened.

Mr. Makkawi said the Al Hayat story may have originated from David Mizrahi, the U.S. correspondent for the newspaper. Mr. Mizrahi seems to find his way around in Washington. The context of his stories is often similar to what the Lebanese Embassy obtains through its official channels.

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